



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20460

AUG 04 2016

OFFICE OF CHEMICAL SAFETY
AND POLLUTION PREVENTION

The Honorable Edward J. Markey
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Markey:

Thank you for your May 13, 2016, letter to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, in which you ask the EPA and the FDA to respond to questions regarding government responses to the Zika virus.

As part of our mission to protect human health and safeguard the environment, the EPA is working with our federal partners and other stakeholders to combat the recent outbreak of the Zika virus. In support with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the EPA is joining the regulated industry, state, tribal and local agencies responsible for vector control and oversight, and at-risk communities to ensure responsible use of both chemical and non-chemical mosquito control. The agency has provided input to federal strategies to quickly address this emerging issue and continues to provide boots-on-the-ground in areas as needed. Currently, the EPA is working to identify potential pesticides that could be quickly registered through our Section 18 Emergency Exemption program to control mosquitoes. Thus far, the agency has granted four different Section 18 requests from the CDC. The EPA is also supplying technical information to educate the Puerto Rican government about pesticides so that they can make informed decisions about the proposals for pesticide use on the island. In addition, the agency is providing scientific and technical support through the EPA's Office of Research and Development, which may encompass a sampling design for pesticide products in surface waters to assess the potential impact to vulnerable human populations and fauna. Furthermore, the agency is working with the CDC to develop new materials to educate the public on using repellents or mosquito products to minimize the risk and maximize their efficacy.

In response to the questions raised in your letter, the only question that pertains to issues over which the EPA has jurisdiction asked how a possible increase in the use of mosquito repellents, adulticides, and larvicides might affect the environment. The EPA takes very seriously our duty to ensure that pesticides can be used according to the label directions with a reasonable certainty of no harm to human health and without posing unreasonable risks to the environment. As a matter of policy, our risk assessments utilize a conservative approach that assumes users will apply products at the highest amount and frequency permitted by the label, and that people who use insect repellents will swim in lakes, rivers, and oceans. We also apply safety factors, as appropriate, to further ensure the human health safety standards established in federal law are met even in the face of real-world uncertainties. Pesticides approved for use against mosquitoes account for a relatively small amount of the total pesticides used in the United States, and we do not anticipate that a potential increase in usage in response to Zika will have a significant impact on our current regulatory conclusions.

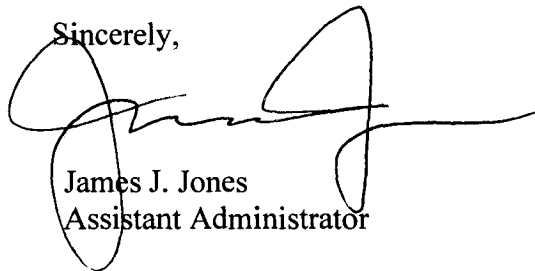
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With that said, the goal of our registration review program is to review each pesticide active ingredient every 15 years. Registration review is ongoing for mosquito repellents, insecticides, and larvicides. As with any pesticide re-evaluation, if the EPA were to determine that one of these products posed an unreasonable risk, the EPA will act quickly to mitigate that risk.

Again, thank you for your letter. If you have further questions, please contact me or your staff may call Sven-Erik Kaiser in EPA's Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations at kaiser.sven-erik@epa.gov or 202-566-2753.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'James J. Jones', written over the printed name and title.

James J. Jones
Assistant Administrator